

Issues of Gender, Race and Class in the Novels of Dionne Brand**Afsal PC***PhD Scholar**Dept. of English, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar, (T.N.) India***Dr. S. Karthik Kumar***Assistant Professor***Abstract**

The article is an attempt in bringing out in bold relief the issues of current and permanent relevance viz. the gender, the racial and the class related, that have unignorable bearing on matters of import like equality, liberty, and emancipation of the human kind stripping itself of all ignominious stratification, beatification and marginalization, in the light of analytical reading of the famed Canadian author Dionne Brand's fictional works.

Key Words: Gender, race, class, Dionne Brand, Canadian Multiculturalism

Diversity is an intriguing aspect of the human quiditus. Right from the anthropological divisions, which could be the primeval of them all, to the modern clashes of varied identities, it has always raised questions and caused annihilating catastrophies that might have endangered the species' very being. It might have seemed his own creation as he has always done in other spheres of life like appropriating his environment for his survival and advancement which in common parlance is the phrase man-made. Like reality which languishes behind the clouds of mystifications and falsehood, the naturalness of man's racial evolution is lost in blindness created by the oddities of his social and political, whence cultural too, evolving. Like everything else which is all connected to one another, the answers to the questions related to these problems are decisive in the settlement of and solutions for the impasse the civilisation is impeded with. But, the truth of man being a creation more of himself than whatever will simplify the complexities of final resolution. Yet, it has been rendered an uneasy task in the times we are navigating through given the debilitation afflicted from the battering

served by the absence of purged scientific temper.

History has witnessed, especially in the purely modern times, another kind of simplification of all the ethnological contrivances into a single dichotomy of the White and the Black races. It was only a historical and socio-evolutional accident that gave the Whites the upper hand they have been enjoying over time. Metaphysics infamously has interpreted this accident as superimposed and divine ordained. But the advent of modern science from the forges of European renaissance developed positivism as a method of historiography. Accordingly, architects of the modern world were equipped with mundane instruments of investigation. This made him believe in himself and he was well clear of fear. The question of why was theoretically answered. Whatever in the forms of art and literature since has only augmented the concept. One conscious of all these knows that bringing about the civilisation saving and hence 'life-saving' way of existence on earth.

As an educator literature has always taken up political and even philosophical

obligations towards sensitising its audiences about the reality of all these contradictions and has coaxed them to ready themselves for a phase where they shall be forced to take up the material of their destiny in their arms. In art and literature, given the delicate nature of their craft and scope, this is done in infinitesimally small doses. But, because of the bulkiness of the overall production, they unfail to hit the targets. In our times there has been rife a scenario where writers are vying among themselves, not in an unhealthy way natural to their ilk, for pressing all the pertinent point. Dionne Brand occupies an enviably significant role among the most modern. The research paper here has gotten to its destination having voyaged through her works to be able to present what is hereby following: The characters of Dionne Brand face gender related racial and class division imposed life situations and existential crises of identity. How these characters intuitively react to these situations and crises is the prime concern of it. Also, the answers they do not succeed in formulating into arguments of substance owing to their backwardness in various reasons are unearthed here.

Dionne Brand has highlighted in her works the clashes between the dialectics of genders, races and classes. Her fiction, irrespective of earlier or later, can be taken monolithic in theme as they find the sustenance from the issues related to the Blacks, not only in one aspect of colour, but also in other varied social factors like gender and class. In "Another Place, Not Here" Dionne Brand reels off a long narrative of Elizete, a representative of the exploited. Elizete has been working under Isaiah, her master. She always realises that

she does not belong to the land she is placed now and yearns to be in another place. She imagines of flights to the unseen places like Aurba or Maracaibo, that too after having cut off the head of Isaiah with her cutlass. "I dream it is a place where a woman can live after she done take the neck of a man. Fearless." (12) Elizete's secret dreams of the sorts are reflected in Verila. Verila stands for revolution throughout the novel, "her mouth too fast, she tongue flying ahead of herself (13)". Verila is very much on a revolution against the Oliviere. She wants to galvanise the people against the injustice under Oliviere and to aquire land for each worker. It is Verila who influences Elizete to move forward from the doldrums of the situation and to runaway. Verila's words count for a change in the system:

Strike and demand a share in the estate. Well, look bold face. We navel string bury here, she say, and we mother and we father and everybody before them. Oliviere use it up like manure for the cane, and what we get, one barrack room and credit in the store until we owe he more than he owe we, and is thief he thief this place in the first place. (14)

These words directly denote the revolutionary concepts of Marxism Dionne Brand's perceptions are created of.

"In Another Place Not Here" speaks more of working class consciousness, especially that of the Blacks. As theirs is the most suppressed and exploited clan in the history of the world, Dionne Brand gives a vent to the feelings of them through her novels. Another major theme of the novel is the deconstruction of conventional kind

of bonds, especially of marriage so as to escape from gender-oriented exploitations. Elizete and Verila together are in a sense search for another place or another space where is flourished their Black queerness.

Brand's collection of stories titled "Sans Souci and Other Stories" also sketches the issues of the Blacks. The central character of "Train to Montreal" represents thousands who become the butt of racialised preoccupation of the Whites. Though Canada is celebrated to be the largest immigrant welcoming country where each culture is assured to have equally entertained, it can be deduced from the works of Brand that the country is of racialised surveillance. The protagonist of the story is frequently made aware of her belonging by the white children's sneering stares and abusive songs:

They were singing, "Wops and frogs, Montreal is full of frogs." She understood and was less willing to get up from the gray vinyl seat. The wheels of the train cackled to the song of the children, she wanted to stand, go to the washroom; but still song frightened her, made her sit still. Maybe they would see her and start singing; maybe they didn't see her yet. She should stand up before they did, before they started singing about "Wops and niggers". (24)

There is left a great amount of contradiction between what the Multicultural Policy of Canada ensures and what is happening in the practical social life of the country. Multicultural policies of Canada "recognise and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of

Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage." Whereas, all the putative facts are portrayed to be in abeyance according to the description of Dionne Brand. The character tries to find a place to cover herself as the intensity of insult grows. She is called "Nigger Whore". Moreover, the reaction of the spectators leaves the reader with a knowledge or feeling that such episodes are not uncommon there. The subject of such insult and racial discrimination is supposed to suppress his or her demonstration of agitation to a few hushed up mutterings.

The same incidents are narrated in the stories "Blossom", "St. Mary's Estate" and "At the Lisbon Plate" as well. "Blossom" is an eponymous short story. Blossom the central character, having run her husband starts to find a life her own. Her reaction toward the Dr-So-and-So who is white rapist is the manifestation of the suppressed feelings rudimented within her. She becomes an obeah woman later and is exemplified resistance: "The Black people on Vaughan Road recognised Blossom as gifted and powerful by the carriage and the fierce look in her eye" (41).

"At Lisbon Plate" is a story that unfolds the cline of misery the clan had to suffer with in defending its rights. The story records carnages on the revolutionaries and the experiences during the colonial period. Colonisation and its subsequent atrocities are well-sketched: The young soldiers talked about the joy of filling a Black with bullets and stuffing a black cunt with dynamite. Then they gathered around

Columbus, the whore master, and sang a few old songs (105).”

The strong antinational feelings created by the sensibility that they are non-Whites are vehement in the characters of “What We All Long For”. The racialised characters of the novel try to fall into the normal Canadian life course. But, they feel a kind of resistance that shoves them away to the suburbs of Richmond Hill. Neither do they belong to their ancestry nor do they love to navigate themselves into urban Canadian stream. Not only they, but their parents also are paralysed against the knowledge that their ancestry and culture stand in the way of achieving a normal life situation in Canada.

Cam and Tuan are always lost in the nostalgia of their missing son. Neither are their struggles to get along with the Canadian nationalism successful as the

state has not considered them at least with medical accreditation. Cam is again bewildered in Canada as she struggles with English language. Whereas Carla, Tuyen and Oku realise their diasporic ancestries, they have never been in search of their past relics or hasty to adapt to a new nationalism. They make themselves prepared not to stuck in between the past home and of the present. Instead, they accept bifurcation. Whereas they readied a mindset to lead positivity toward the racialised Canadian society, they had never been able to join what their parents called “regular Canadian life (47)”.

Dionne Brand’s works of fiction are the reflexions over the realities of Canadian society—usually unpalatable and thus dubbed antinational—which, with its racial consciousness and capital interests remain what it has been over the colonial period.

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